

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6889

INFO AMCONSUL TORONTO

UNCLAS OTTAWA 2509

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELTN, CA

SUBJECT: PROPOSED ADDITIONAL ST. CLAIR RIVER INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE

PASS DOT (FOR FHWA)

REF: EB/TT/OA/AVP (GORDON) DS-4 OF JUNE 26 TO

OTTAWA O'CONNOR)

1. STATE OF MICHIGAN MAY 14 REQUEST TO ARRANGE MEETING TO DISCUSS FINANCING AN ADDITIONAL BRIDGE ACROSS ST. CLAIR RIVER DISCUSSED JULY 7 BY TCO WITH WHITTAKER (SECRETARY OF GOC INTERNATIONAL BIDGES COMMITTEE, EXTAFF).

2. WHITTAKER INDICATED THAT THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE FROM SARNIA AND OTHER LOCAL INTERESTS TO IMPROVE BRIDGE SITUATION. SARNIA PEOPLE, HOWEVER, APPEAR PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN TWINNING EXISTING BLUE WATER BRIDGE WHICH CONNECTS THAT CITY WITH PORT HURON, MICHIGAN. HE WILL DISCUSS MATTER WITH ONTARIO PRVINCIAL AUTHORITIES AND PROMISED PROVIDE US WITH REPORT OF THEIR VIEWS. WHITTAKER ALSO ASSURED TCO GOC WOULD BE WILLING TO MEET SOON FOR DICUSSION OF ISSUE AND SUGGESTED WE MAKE FORMAL REQUEST.

3. COMMENT; TCO HAS ALSO TALKED BY PHONE WITH MICHIGAN DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF HIGHWAYS MCCARTHY (517-373-1884),
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AUTHOR OF MAY 14 LETTER, WHO EMPHASIZED URGENCY OF

MEETING TO DISCUSS FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS WHICH MUST BE NAILED DOWN BEFORE PLANNING AND DESIGN OF BRIDGE AS WELL AS ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES (WHICH MAY REQUIRE SEVERAL YEARS) CAN EVEN BE COMMENCED. SUGGESTED EARLY SEPTEMBER WOULD BE IDEAL. ISSUE HAS CONSIDERABLE URGENCY IN VIEW OF PLANS BUILD SECOND INTERSTATE HIGHWAY TO PORT HURON (FROM FLINT) AND CONSTRUCTION CURRENTLY UNDERWAY OF ONTARIO FREEWAY FROM LONDON TO SARNIA. SINGLE EXISTING BRIDGE MAY BECOME A MAJOR BOTTLENECK IN EARLY 1980'S.

4. EMBASSY RECOMMENDS DEPARTMENT COORDIANTE WITH DOT (FHWA) AND STATE OF MICHIGAN WITH A VIEW TO USG MAKING FORMAL REQUEST FOR MEETING AND DEVELOPING US POSITIONS. BASIC QUESTION WILL PROBABLY INVOLVE MICHIGAN INTEREST IN FINANCING US SHARE OF BRIDGE FROM HIGHWAY TRUST FUND WHICH, IF MATCHED BY SIMILAR CANADIAN SOURCE, WOULD ALLOW LOW TOLL JUST TO COVER MAINTENANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, CANADIAN POSITION LIKELY TO BE AGAINST FINANCING ITS SHARE FROM GENERAL REVENUES (HIGHWAY TRUST FUNDS DO NOT EXIST) IN FAVOR OF ISSUANCE OF SELF-LIQUIDATING BONDS BY LOCAL OR PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES WITH TOLLS SET AT RELATIVELY HIGH RATE TO RETIRE BONDS, COVER INTEREST, AND PROVIDE FOR MAINTENANCE.
PORTER

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